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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; MIDDLE EAST SUMMIT, DPRK NUCLEAR PROGRAM,
IRAN, COLOMBIA-PARAMILITARY CRISIS, 02/20/07; BUENOS AIRES

11. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Top stories focus on the poor results of the summit between Secretary Rice and Middle East leaders Olmert and Abbas; the

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positive repercussions of North Korea's agreement to deactivate its nuclear program; the mounting tension in Iran due to its intention to continue with its nuclear program and the crisis in the Uribe administration following the resignation of his Foreign Minister for her brother's alleged dealings with the paramilitary.

12. OPINION PIECES AND KEY STORIES

- "Meeting With Only Vague Promises"

Oscar Raul Cardoso, leading "Clarín" international columnist, opines (02/20) "There isn't much to show after the Jerusalem summit - the first negotiation on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in six years - between PM Olmert, President Abbas and Secretary Rice. Only a vague promise, without a date, that the participants will repeat the meeting.

"This shows the extent to which the recent agreement between Al Fattah and Hamas to build a unity government for the Palestinian State is becoming an obstacle for the recovery of the peace process, instead of promoting it, even though violence between Palestinians has diminished in Gaza and the West Bank.

"Truly, it was impossible to foresee major progress in this opportunity given that the next Palestinian government wasn't going to include any acknowledgement for the State of Israel, as Abbas promoted. There was only a feeble promise to 'respect' previous agreements between the Palestinian State and Jerusalem.

"Why meet then, given the narrow margin for maneuvering? First, because politically, the three parties needed to produce sensible results. Olmert and Rice are ranked low in opinion polls at home and the Jewish image suffered in the U.S. after last year's sterile and brutal incursion into Lebanon.

"For his part, Abbas had to compromise with Hamas, against his will, and was highly criticized. He needed an official Israeli gesture to show he's still an accepted interlocutor, despite his recent agreement with Hamas. This is, perhaps, the only more or less visible result obtained by one of the three at this meeting...."

- "Iran Pursues its Uranium and Tension Mounts in the Persian Gulf"

Leftist "Pagina 12" says (02/19) "Tension keeps mounting in the Persian Gulf. Amid White House rhetorical attacks against Iran for

its alleged responsibility in Iraq's crisis, and only three days away from the UN deadline to stop its nuclear program, Tehran decided to raise its bet. It ruled out any suspension of its uranium enrichment process, accused the U.S. of promoting regional instability and shows the world the power of its military elite in new exercises that will include over 60,000 men.

"..... This is not the first time that the Guardians carry out this kind of drill... However, today's exercise has a new meaning for the international community, given that Tehran might suffer the sanctions approved by the UNSC last December.

".....Iran appears more cornered by the U.S. and most of the international community. This is why it intends to add regional forces from other Islamic countries... But Ahmadinejad hasn't been too successful so far. The only one who replied to his request was his main ally, Syrian President Bashar al Assad."

- "Stigma"

Marcelo Cantelmi, leading "Clarín" international editor, opines (02/20) "The timing of this crisis for President Uribe is horrible on the eve of the Bush visit, given that the U.S. President is the Colombian leader's unconditional supporter. The Democrats that turned the chief of the White House into an isolated leader with very little of his old power, now warn that they are carefully keeping an eye on the Colombian government's 'paramilitary' crisis. The gist of the problem, which opens the door to unforeseeable perspectives for Uribe, is that the paramilitary are not only that which they admit -- fighters without rules against the guerrillas --. They're also and almost essentially, drug-traffickers. It's easy to suggest, then, the effects this stigma will have among Uribe's local allies, particularly the U.S."

13. EDITORIALS

- "Diplomatic Achievement and Nuclear Risk"

An editorial in leading "Clarín" reads (02/19) "..... In an international scenario rocked by wars and threats, Beijing's recent agreement on North Korea's denuclearization is paramount. North Korea's regime promises to deactivate its nuclear development program, close down its main reactor and allow IAEA inspections. In exchange, it will obtain energy assistance, the lifting of economic sanctions and a new deal with the U.S. Thanks to this, the level of threat represented by North Korea in the region is reduced.

"This puts an end to an escalation of tension that had led to international concern when North Korea's Communist regime announced its nuclear tests and the USG threatened toughest retaliation measures. In this case, six-party talks prevailed...."

- "Good News for World Peace"

Daily-of-record "La Nación" says (02/19) "..... The agreement was reached thanks to a strategic mistake incurred by North Korea in October, last year, when it detonated its first atomic bomb as part of its nuclear tests. This sparked the reaction of China - which had supported the North Korean dynasty for six decades -. It cut off its military aid, opening the door to U.S. financial sanctions.

"..... The agreement is good news for world peace, because one can dream that one of the two most important crises in terms of peace and international security is now about to be solved (the second one being Iran). But North Korea's conduct will continue to be reason for concern because its unpredictable arrogance has, in the past, frustrated other similar solutions."

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